2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wil Kerala A Wil
Central Kerala Nayar

A husband normally visited his wife after eating supper in his natal home, and left before breakfast. Even today in many orthodox Nayar homes men eat regularly in their taravāds and accept food in their wives' homes only on special invitation from their wives' kāranavans. Traditionally a husband placed his weapons outside his wife's door as a sign to other men that he was within. My informants in a Cochin village reported that, within living memory in the late nineteenth century, if two husbands called on the same night the one who came last might sleep outside on the veranda. Usually a woman's regular husbands knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

The relationship with the visiting husband was called *sambandham* (Sanskrit, "joining together"). At the start of a girl's first sambandham her husband came to her house privately at night, sometimes with a few friends of his own age. In the presence of the girl's kin he presented her with a white cloth of the kind worn as a skirt. The occasion was not marked by feasting. Later husbands might or might not present the cloth. A transient visitor is said to have left a gold coin beneath the woman's pillow, and a regular husband might do the same on the first night of his union.

While his relationship lasted, a regular husband was expected to make gifts to his wife at the three main festivals of the year. Vishu, in April, was the Malayalam New Year; Onam, in September, was a harvest festival; Tiruvadira, in December, was a women's festival to Kama Devan, the god of passion. The gifts were of bathing oil, bananas, wafer biscuits, and betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing. In some areas a husband also gave a loin cloth of superior quality at Onam. The gifts were prepared by women of the husband's taravād, and he should present them in person to each of his wives on the festival day. If a husband failed to make these gifts it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. It should be noted that the gifts, trivial in value, were gifts of courtship and were in no sense maintenance. Bathing oil is a feminine toilet requisite; wafer biscuits are delicacies served at feasts; and the giving of chewing materials between a man and a woman is everywhere in South India associated with courtship or with the first night of marriage. A husband had no obligation at all to maintain his wife, for she received her food, shelter, and regular clothing from her taravād.

The only other obligations of a husband came at the birth of a child. When a woman became pregnant it was necessary for one or more men of appropriate caste to acknowledge possible biological

141 *564 *Face.*—Supraciliary arches prominent in two. Face of one distinctly pyramidal; in two others it was rather so. In one the broadest part of the head was immediately behind the ears, low down.

Figure.—Fifteen are noted slight, four as slight to medium, five as medium. Two were marked as powerfully built.

142 302 *564 *Hair.*—An oval patch of hair on the vertex remains; the rest of the head, the face and body are always shaved. A moustache is never worn. The men are always clean shaven except during mourning for a near relative, when the razor is not used for a year. The hair on the vertex is allowed to grow long, and well treated with oil, looks glossy and black, is tied in a knot which hangs over the forehead or to one side of the head at the pleasure of the wearer. As a rule the hair on the head is plentiful and wavy, while in a few it is very thick. About 20 per cent. of those examined had scanty hair on the head. The following facts were recorded:—

142 *564 A man of 50 had a few gray hairs.

A man of 49 had hair distinctly gray: on the face, white when sprouting.

A man of 52 had a few white hairs on the sternum; not on the head.

Baldness is uncommon; and, though old age does not overtake them too early, it has been noted that one man of 40 looked about 60.

[302] Gingelly oil is commonly used for the hair, but its use for the hair is said by some to have certain effects on the body. One man said he used cocoanut oil because, if he used the other, he would get boils all over his body and suffer from headaches. It is usual to oil the head [827] profusely during the month Karkadagam * "in order to cool the body."

Hair on the chest and arms.—As a rule the growth is slight to very slight in 14 out of 25, while in the remaining 11 it is moderate.

On the legs.—In 20 per cent. it was slight; in the rest moderate or thick.

*[564] [302] [305] *Note.*—Men never shave themselves. With the exception of the oval patch on the crown of the head, about 7½ inches long and 5½ inches wide where the hair is allowed to grow long, all hair on the head, face, chest, abdomen, armpits, wrists and about the pubes is shaved by the barber. The back is not shaved, nor the legs: the arms sometimes, but not always. A few do not shave the chest.

* During the rains.

Nâyar women of all classes shave the hair about the vagina. They shave themselves, standing, placing one foot on a bench or anything a couple of feet or so from the ground, thus raising the leg. The use of scissors for this purpose is rare, new fangled and not sanctified by custom. In a few houses now-a-days razors of English or German manufacture are kept for the use of the women; but according to general custom the barber woman pays periodical visits, and the women of the house receive from her a razor, with which they shave themselves. The armpits, the eyebrows and stray hairs on any other part of the body, excepting of course the head, are shaved by the barber woman. I have it an excellent authority that some of the elderly women—possibly those who are old and fleshy—submit their entire person to the barber woman's razor. The young women never.

In the Tamil country the women, as is well known, use a depilatory. Possibly the Nâyar women resort to shaving in order to avoid the unpleasant odour of the depilatory. The reason for shaving or destroying the hair on that part of the body is not apparent. No reason is assigned for it. Very likely the custom arose out of necessities for cleanliness, when the Nâyars were not the clean people they are now, and like all customs has persisted aimlessly.

Colour of the skin.—Using Broca's colour tables. The darkest was as No. 43 (one only); the fairest, 44 to 30. Two others were fair or very nearly so. The colour number for 5 was 37; for 5 was 28; for 13 was 29, and lighter. Darker than the Nambûtiri. The women, who are not so much exposed to the sun, are distinctly fair as well as well favoured. Many are very handsome.

Colour of the eyes.—Out of 20 individuals (using Broca's colour tables for the eyes), in 13 the number corresponding to their eyes was 2, while in 7 it was 1 to a little lighter. So that the eye is, as a rule, brown; rarely black.

Ornaments, men.—Not much jewellery is worn. One or two golden earrings called kadukkans are worn, as a rule, in each ear by those who can afford to do so. Some of the members of this clan who call themselves "Paḍi-nâyirattil"—"one of 10,000"—doubtless a relic of the old Nâyar military system, pierce the ears, but never wear earrings. The title of the hereditary chief of these is Ayyâyira Prabhu Karttâvu. The 10,000 do not, however, all belong to this clan. I came across a man of the Nambiyâr clan who belonged to it, and he too could not wear earrings. Rings and amulets are also worn commonly.

One individual wore 2 golden earrings, of the pattern called kadukkan in each ear.

One individual wore two rings made of an amalgam of gold and copper, called "tambâk" in the vernacular, on the ring finger of the right hand, for good luck. "Tambâk" rings are lucky rings. It is a good thing to

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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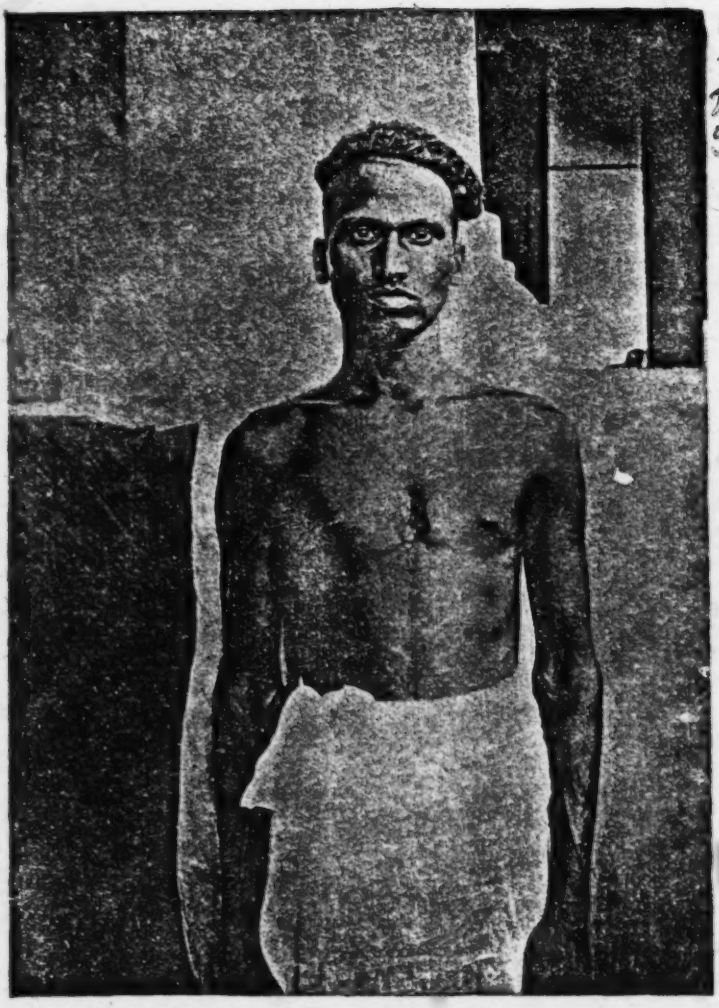
Nayar



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AKATTU CHARNA NAYAR. FATHER A NAMBUTIRI.

[Facing P. 196]

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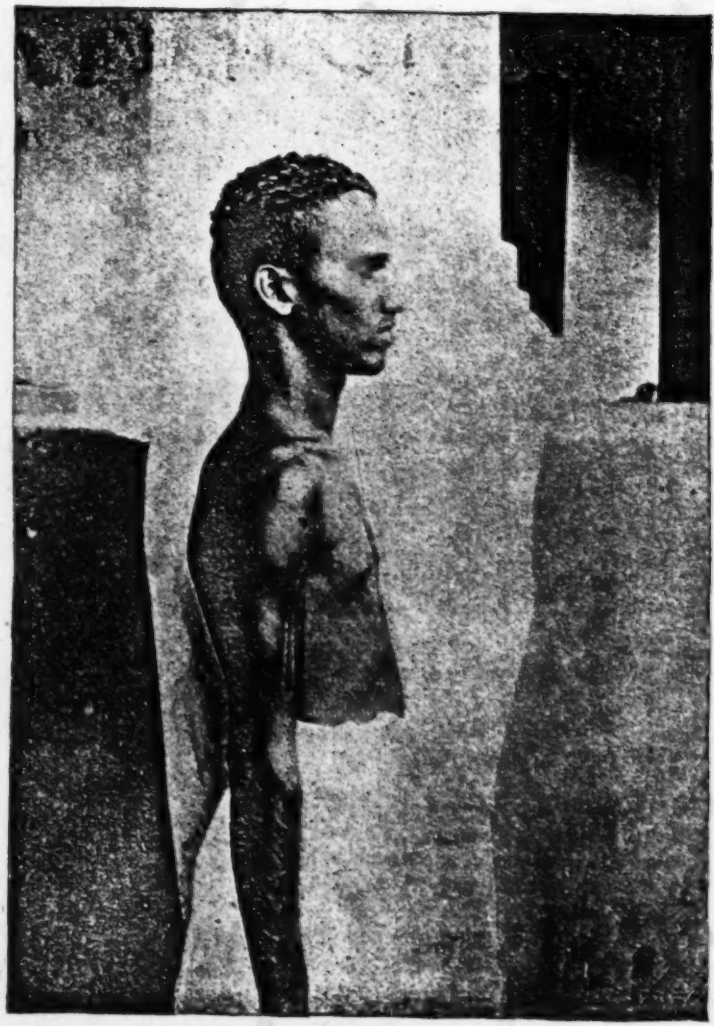

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AKATTU CHARNA NAYAR. FATHER A NAMBUTIRI.

[Facing P. 198]

*301 *564 silver earrings called kalluvechcha kadukkan which means an earring set with stone (pushyarâgam—topaz).

(1) Three plain golden rings on ring finger of left hand, the same on the little finger of the same hand, and a thin iron ring on the ring finger of the right hand.

● [302] (2) Sandal paste patch over glabella; four stripes of the same on chest; three vertical stripes on each upper arm.

(3) Three golden earrings—the usual kadukkans—[789] in each ear. An amulet in a silver cylindrical case worn on the waist. Inside the case is a charm written on a copper leaf. It is to protect its wearer against the influences of the evil eye.

(4) One tambâk, one plain gold ring on ring finger of the right hand.

[304] (5) Ears pierced. Wears no earrings as he has no money. A dab of sandal paste over the glabella, another over the sternum, and on each shoulder.

163 *Prolificness.*—The clan being endogamous, it will be well to note here the number of children born in 16 families of those examined. In all there were born 44 male and 35 female children; altogether 79. This gives an average of 4·9 in each family; and of those there were living at the time an average of 4·6 for each family. A figure which is above the average for the Nâyars as a body, be it noted.

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141 It is perhaps scarcely worth noting that the average weight of four men was 119 lb.

Names of some of those examinad.

613 *564

Taravâd.			Name.		Occupation.		Age.
Mêlapalli	...	...	Kêlu Nâyar	...	Cooly	...	22
463 Kanjôli	...	...	Râman Nâyar	...	Writer	...	22
Kurundottathil	...	...	Krishnan Nâyar	...	Do.	...	20
551 Puthukûdi	...	...	Achutan Nâyar	...	Trade	...	22
Ponmilli	...	...	Krishnan Nâyar	...	Do.	...	45
115 Kuttakil	...	...	Râman Nâyar	...	Cooly	...	32
Payarvîtil	...	...	Aiyappen Nâyar	...	Mason	...	36
Pûvakunial	...	...	Châthu Nâyar	...	Cultivator	...	26
Kalathil	...	...	Shangaran Nâyar	...	Cooly	...	25
Korolath	...	...	Shangunni Nâyar	...	Do.	...	22
Pallitbotathil	...	...	Gôpalan Nâyar	...	Nothing	...	22
Kûtakkil	...	...	Râman Nâyar	...	Cooly	...	30
Thondil	...	...	Appa Nâyar	...	Writer	...	20

551 Thondi or Thundi was, I think, mentioned by one of the ancient geographers as a port near where this last man lived. This man, therefore, bears the name of the place as it was, probably, in the days of Ptolemy.

141 *564 Some individuals were described in my notes—

(1) Nasal bones wide and thick. Teeth project.

(2) Lips thick and somewhat projecting. Chin receding. The flesh on the chin is thick, giving it a rounded lump like appearance. Inion appears to be in a projecting ridge round the back of the head. (Cephalic length 197.)

(3) Supraciliary arches slight. Nasal notch. Nose straight. Lips slightly everted. Teeth in upper jaw project forwards. Eyes deep set. Inner corner of eyes a trifle oblique.

The last two specimens are uncommon; not typical. The thick lips and projecting teeth are not usually noticeable as in their case. The long oval face is the common type. The fashion of wearing no hair on the face, shaving the head at the back and at the sides and a little over the forehead, leaving but the oval patch on the vertex, no head covering being worn, gives the face an appearance of length. But while the average of the measure vertex to chin, for all the Nâyars,* reduced to stature equals 100, is 11·9, the same for 21 of the 30 different castes† examined in Malabar is greater. The Mukkuvan is as high as 13·4, while on the other hand the Nambûtiri is less, being but 11·7.

Figure.—One out of 25 is recorded as "stout." One-third were "slight." Nearly two-thirds were medium or thereabouts; and this seems to represent the average.

142 *564 *Hair.*—More than half are noted as having whiskers, that is, growth of hair on the cheeks. In two-thirds of the subjects the hair on the head was thick and wavy; in a few cases it was very thick. Individuals aged respectively 25, 32, and 52 were noted as being a little grey. In one-quarter of the total number the hair was thin to moderately thick. One individual of this clan is marked as having hair a little grey.

Hair on the chest.—Rather more than a quarter of the whole had thick to moderately thick hair. In the case of one man hair was thick all over the body, even on the back: everywhere except over the ribs, the front of the upper arm and shoulder. In another the hair on the small of the back was *thick*. In the greater number of individuals it was marked slight, and moderate, and in a few it was absent.

* Group A included.

† Counting each clan of the Nâyars separately.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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NAYAR WOMEN (SOUTH MALABAR), AGED 20 AND 17.

[Facing P. 210]

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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Nayar

length was 5 cm. or over. In one individual the iliac bone was much higher at the right side than on the left. 141 564*

Face.—A few individuals were noted thus—

(1) Deep nasal notch. Nasal point slightly elevated. Helix of ear very thin; the Darwin's point in the centre of the curve on the left and high up on the right.

(2) Deep nasal notch. Chin receding. Lips thick.

(3) Slight nasal notch. Supraciliary arches developed at outer edges. Chin recedes.

(4) Supraciliary arches and glabella in one marked ridge. Nasal point somewhat raised. Nasal notch.

(5) Very deep nasal notch. Very wide and thick eyebrows.

Figure.—More than half are marked as slight—a few of them "very slight"; the rest "medium." None "stout."

Hair.—As a rule, to which exceptions are very few, hair on the head is thick and wavy: curly in the case of one individual. The hair of a man of 70 was noted as "very thin and grey." A man of 31 also had hair which was "thin and grey," but he was exceptional. The growth of hair on the cheeks—whiskers—was observed in almost every subject. 142 564*

Hair on the chest.—The average is "moderate."

On the arms.—The growth of hair in half of the subjects was "slight to very slight"; in the other half, "moderate to thick."

On the legs.—It was noted as "moderate" to "thick" in more than three-fourths of those examined; in a few, "slight."

The growth of hair of a few individuals is here specified—

(1) Aged 54. Hair on the head moderately thick and grey. Hair on the face white. Growth of hair on the cheeks. Hair all over chest grey. Very long thick hair on the back. Hair on the legs and arms thick.

(2) Aged 36. Hair on the head moderately thick and wavy. Glossy black. On chest and middle line of abdomen, moderate. On the arms and legs moderately thick. Shaves the head (except the crown), face, chest, abdomen, wrists and hands, about every 15 days. [302]

(3) Aged 28. Hair on the head thick and wavy. Growth of hair on cheeks; on the chin it is very thick. On the chest, moderate; on the arms, very slight; on the legs, thick. Does not shave his chest, as doing so would make him weak; on the other hand, if he does not shave his head and face, he will become sick. [302] [753] [826]

302 [777] Shaving cannot be done on a Tuesday or a Saturday, or on the day of an eclipse of sun or moon; nor on the full moon day, the new moon day, nor on the 11th day of the moon—the Êkadasi. This applies to most Nâyars, but not to all.

142 564 *Colour of the skin.*—The skin of the darkest individual corresponded to Broca's colour type No. 43. There was but one of this colour.

Three were of No. 28.
Seventeen were of No. 29 and lighter.
Three were of No. 37 and lighter.
One not taken.
The average colour must be nearly as fair as 37.

Colour of the eyes.—The average corresponds rather to Broca's No. 2 than to his No. 1.

Nine individuals were of No. 1.
Seven individuals were between 1 and 2.
Seven individuals were of No. 2.
Two not taken.

301 564 [304] *Ornaments.*—All those examined had had their ears pierced; but most of them wore no earrings, saying it was not proper for a Purattu Châma Nâyar to wear them. Four individuals, or nearly one-sixth of the whole, however, wore the ordinary earrings; one indeed wore (the only instance) one gold and one silver earring in each ear. Rings of any kind may be worn on the fingers, and the thin iron ring such as is usually worn, was observed occasionally on the ring finger of the right hand, or on the little finger of the left.

The ornaments worn by a few individuals were as follows:—

[789] (1) Aged 23. Two rings on the ring finger of the right hand; one of them tambâk (described already), the other of silver and iron. The last was worn as a prophylactic against fever. Said he had worn it for the previous five days, and during that period he had had no fever! (This individual, by the way, had been vaccinated, and suffered from an attack of small-pox nine years afterwards.)

[237] [789] [776] (2) Aged 35. One copper ring on the ring finger of the right hand. An amulet of tiger's teeth (as in my collection) on a string round the waist. The amulet contains nothing, and is worn to protect its wearer from fever. Two silver amulet cases of the usual cylindrical pattern worn on the waist; each contains a mantram written on paper for protection against evil spirits. On

In three the cephalic length was 20 cm. or over. In nine the nasal height was 5 cm. or over.

Face.—The notes made on a few individuals will be set down here. In most cases the supraciliary arches were well marked, and the nasal notch was deep. Nose generally straight, or nasal point slightly raised. Prognathism rare. Lips, especially the lower lip, often very thick.

(1) Very well bred looking. Eyebrows fleshy and thickly marked. Supraciliary arches very slight. Deep nasal notch. Nose straight; nasal point raised very slightly—and very well shaped. In the left ear a very small hole above the usual one in the lobe; I have not noted why it was made.

(2) Supraciliary arches rather prominent. Upper portion of forehead somewhat protuberant. Deep nasal notch. Nasal point raised. Lower lip thick. This man's father was a Nambûtiri. He appears in the plate.

(3) Forehead high. Deep nasal notch. Slight prognathism. Lower lip very thick.

(4) Supraciliary arches not marked. Nasal notch moderate. Lips thin.

Two out of the twenty-five were deeply pitted with small-pox, the Malabar goddess of small-pox, Bhânnâramûrti, having hurt them. In one man the broadest part of the head was above the ears, a little in front.

Figure.—The number of those put down as slight and those put down as medium are about equal.

Hair.—Worn in the usual Malayali fashion which has been described already and, as a rule, plentiful and wavy; treated with gingelly oil, which is sometimes perfumed. The number of individuals whose hair (on the head) was noted as "very thick and wavy" is abnormally large. A young man aged 24 had some white hairs here and there on his head; a man of 35 was a little grey; a man of 39 also; and one of 44 was quite grey. Whiskers or growth of hair on the cheeks were observed in more than half the number of subjects. In several there was hair, fairly thick in some, in the small of the back, and one man had thick hair all over the back.

Hair on the chest was "moderate" or "thick" in more than half.

Hair on the arms was "moderate to thick" in about half; in the other half "slight."

Hair on the legs was, as a rule, thick: rarely less than moderately thick. The legs of one man were like those of a bear.

The hair on the person of a youth aged 20 (No. 1 above) was noted thus—

(*a*) On the head very plentiful, black, glossy and wavy; treated with gingelly oil. Sprouting on the lip and chin. A small patch of moderate thickness on the sternum; slight on the arms; moderate on the legs.

Another, aged 25—

(*b*) On the head very thick, and approaching the outer edge of the eyebrows. Thick on the chest and mid line of abdomen, although these parts have been shaved recently, as also the arm pits. Thick hair in the small of the back. Slight growth on the back. Moderate on the arms; thick on the legs.

The individual (*a*) said he shaved any day of the week, and any day of the month. He was the Kârnavan of his Taravâd: a very youthful one.

Colour of the skin.—The fairest was between 33 and 40 (Broca); the darkest was 43 (redder). The average seems to be between 29, 37 and 44.

Colour of the eyes is a light brown. The actual numbers are—

Of colour type No.	1	(Broca)	5	individuals.
" " "	1 to 2	"	6	"
" " "	2	"	7	"
" " "	2 to 3	"	5	"

(Two were not included.) So that, although the eyes of rather more than one-fifth were dark brown, what would ordinarily be called black, the remainder were distinctly lighter in colour; and the number of persons whose eyes might be called quite a light brown, equalled those whose eyes were nearly black.

Weight of but 3 was recorded. The average is 105½ lb.

Prolificness.—In the 8 recorded instances the average number of children in each family was 3·7. It will be remembered that this clan is perhaps most of all under process of intermixture, its women mating with men of several higher clans (their own included) and with Nambûtiris.

Ornaments.—Ears are always pierced, and the usual Malabar earrings—kadukkans—are worn; sometimes as many as four in each ear. Individuals were noted thus—

(1) Aged 24. Circular patch of sandalwood paste, 1·8 cms. in diameter over the glabella. Two stripes of sandalwood paste on each upper arm. No ornaments,

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

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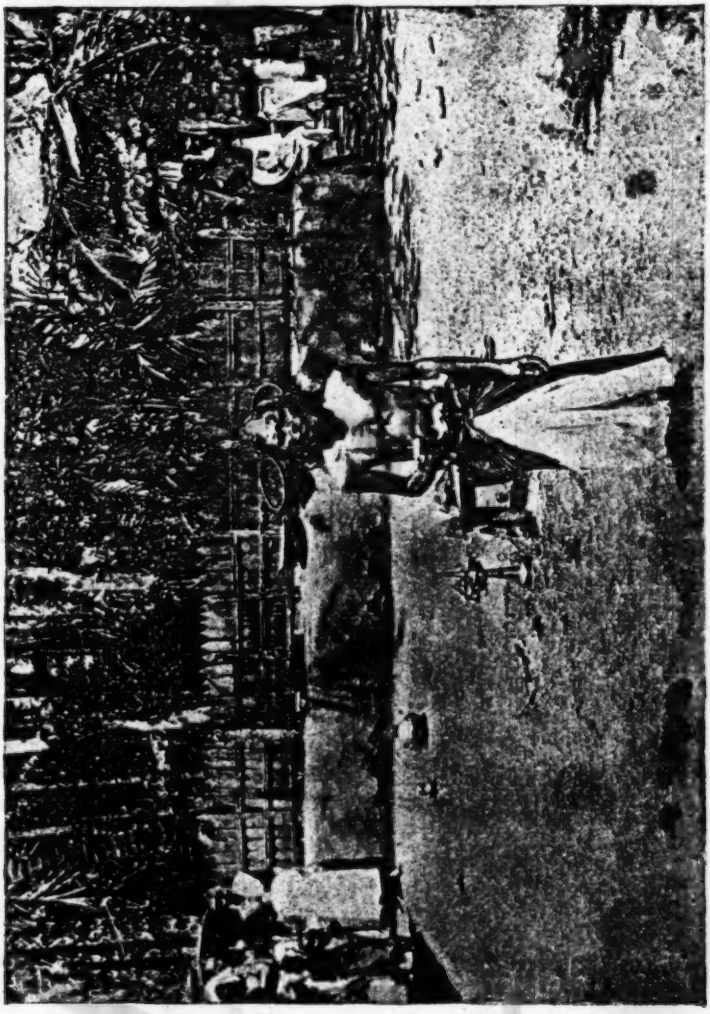

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[Facing P. 242]

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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Nayar

765 of boundaries. With the observance of the Pinda Atiyantaram or feast of pindams, there is involved the Dîkṣha, or leaving the entire body unshaved for 41 days, or for a year. There is no variable limit between 41 days [184] or a year. Forty-one days is permissible as the period for the Dîkṣha, but a year is correct. The 41-day period is the rule in North Malabar.

[593] I have seen many who were under the Dîkṣha for a [604] year. He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew [302] of the deceased. One member only of the Taravâd bears the mark of mourning by his growth of hair, remarkable enough in Malabar where every one as a rule, excepting the Mâppila Muhammadans (and they shave their heads), shaves his face, head (except the patch on the crown) chest and arms, or at any rate his wrists. He who is under the Dîkṣha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly seeds to the spirit of the deceased every morning after [784] his bath; and he is under restriction from women, from alchoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also tobacco. When the Dîkṣha is observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-dried vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year after death. When it is carried on for a year there is observed every month a ceremony called * Bali. It is noteworthy [821] that, in this monthly ceremony and for the conclusion of [805] the Dîkṣha, it is not the thirtieth or three hundred and sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star which was presiding when the deceased met his death: the returning day on which the star presides.

793 For the * Bali, a man of the Elâyatu caste officiates. 564 It has been said already ("Nambûtiri Brâhmans": 765 Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I), that the Elâyatus are priests for the Nâyars. They wear the Brâhman's thread, but they are not Brâhmans. They are not permitted to study the Vêdas, but to the Nâyars they stand in the place of the ordinary Purôhit. The officiating Elâyatu prepares the rice for the Vêli when the deceased, represented by Karuka grass, is offered boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds and some other things. The Elâyatu should be paid a rupee for his services, which are considered necessary even when the man under Dîkṣha himself is familiar with the required ceremonial.

765 The last day of the Dîkṣha is one of festivity. After 803 the * Bali the man under Dîkṣha is shaved. All this over

* Or Bâli.

796 778 sure what the Nâyars take; perhaps the same. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm.

796 783 782 A shrine to which the Malayalis, Nâyars included, resort is that of Subramania in Palni, in the north-west corner of the Madura district, about a week's march from the confines of Malabar near Palghat. Not only are vows [765] paid to this shrine, but men, letting their hair grow for a year after their father's death, proceed to have it cut there. [302] The plate shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he is carrying is called a kâvadi. There are two kinds of kâvadi: a milk kâvadi (one containing milk in a pot) and a fish kâvadi (one containing fish). The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kâvadi and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the role of beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow; leaves his kâvadi and his hair and a small sum of money.

Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nâyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nâyar as expressed under certain circumstances; for between the Nâyars and these there is in this respect little if any differenee. It was at Guruvayûr in November 1895. On a high raised platform under a peepul tree were a number of people under vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed for him (on his behalf) that if he were cured he would make the pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round his neck and a like string on his right arm (these were in some way connected with the vow). His head was bent and he sat motionless under his kâvadi, leaning on the bar, which when he carried it rested on his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on roots (yams, etc.) and milk,—no rice. Now he had had the [776] long-looked-for dream, and he was about to start. As an instance of the Malayali's ignorance of the Hindu theogony, this youth said he was going to the god "Sri Krishnan" in Palni. It is well known that god there is *not* Krishna.

* [See Plate XI, facing p. 230, Category 116--Analyst]

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

291 184 richer classes go in for Benares silk. This is wound round the loins and extends to the feet. The upper part of the body is seldom covered by the commoner folk, though most of them carry a second piece of cloth with them. Among the titled classes of the Nāyars it is customary to put on a long piece of laced muslin on the upper part of their body.

Mostly the Nāyars go barefoot, though expensive and elaborately-made sandals are used by the richer classes.

824 302 *Scents, Flowers, etc.*—The Nāyars use a lot of scented things. Sandal-wood paste, which has a beautiful aroma, is generally used on various parts of the body. Musk is also used, generally by ladies. Jasmine is the favourite flower. It is worn in clusters by women in their hair. It is very difficult to find an old Nāyar house which has not got a jasmine plant in its garden. Its scent is delightful, and when strung together as a garland it makes the most delightful, as well as the most welcome, present to a lady. Jasmine is also strewn in the bridal bed.

415 412 326 *Household Utensils.*—Household utensils, plates, pots, etc., are mostly made of bronze. Very few Nāyar families have got what is spoken of as household silver. The material they use is generally made with great taste, but the praise for this does not belong to them. The workers in bronze are hereditary craftsmen. Their life is devoted to designing and making these things, and naturally they have acquired great efficiency in it. The only praise that the Nāyars deserve for using them lies in the fact that, in spite of a strong temptation to go in for aluminium ware, which is much cheaper, they persist in using the costly, but better made and more artistic bronze things.

121 178 What is the future of this people? Will they become patrilineal and merge into the vast ocean of Hindu population, or will they remain matrilineal, while adjusting their social relationships and economic organisations to suit the changing conditions of life in India? Will they break up their *Tharawad* (the joint family) and abandon the primitive system of classificatory relationship? These are questions difficult to answer, but some new tendencies may here be noticed.

178 611 One thing I must say to start with. There is no chance of the system of matriliny undergoing any fundamental change in Malabar. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the economic interest is too large to submit to any change in the order of things dictated by purely theoretical reasons. Even if we could establish that the patrilineal system of life is superior to the matrilineal, the change from the latter to the former would not take place in Malabar, because it would mean a social revolution of some magnitude. Secondly, as long as there is the Brahmin marriage system it is not only the Nāyars that are interested in its upkeep, but also the Nampudiris.

178 564 Another reason is this. There is in Malabar what may be called a strong caste war. There is first of all the Nampudiri class, mostly landlords with great social and religious influence. Their rivalry is not of great importance. There are, then, the Nāyars. Thirdly, we have the Syrian Christians, who are an extremely intelli-

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

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A NAIR GIRL FOR SAMBANDHAM (MARRIAGE) WITH HER BRIDESMAIDS.

[facing p. 31]

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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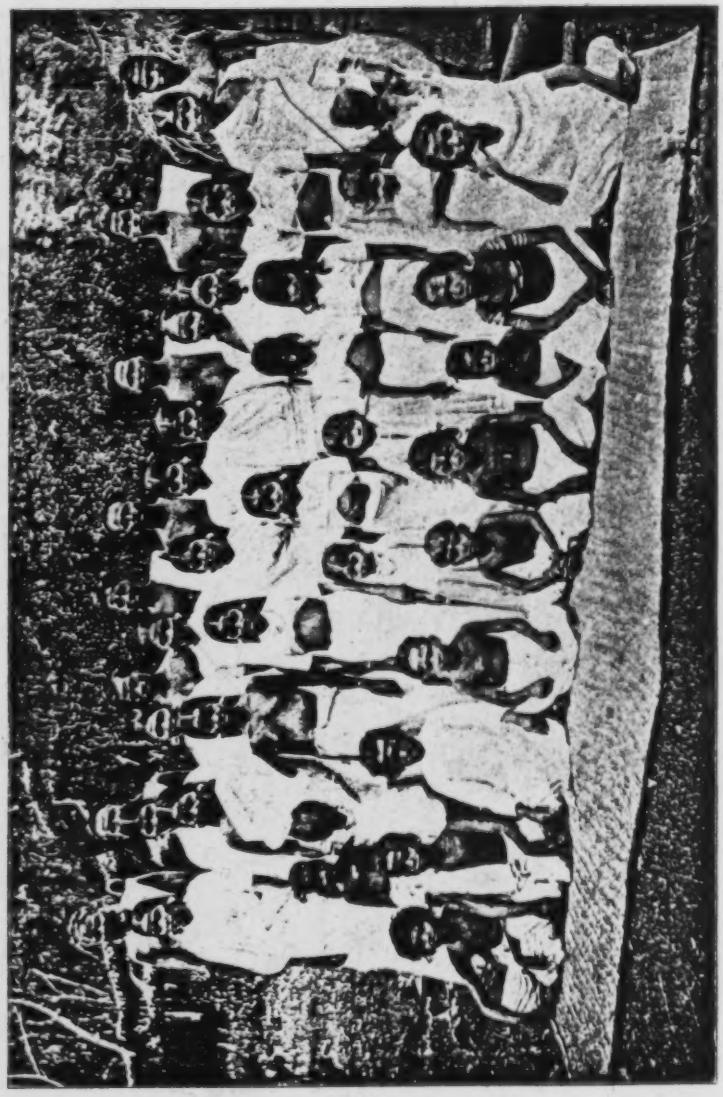

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A TYPICAL NAYAR FAMILY

[facing p. 47]

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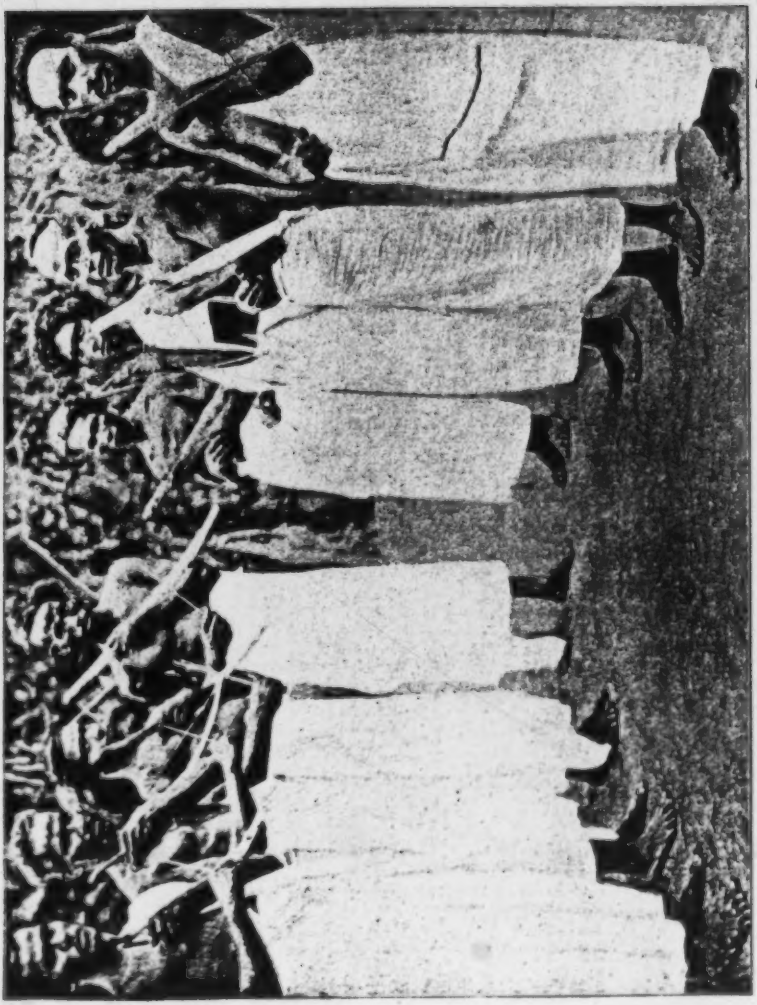

A PARTY OF NAYARS: TIMING ON BOWSTRINGS DURING ONAM FESTIVAL.

[facing p. 71]

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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Nayar

291 is no covering for the head. This forms the costume of a [292] large majority of them. On special occasions or when he goes to public places, he has the same loin cloth, while a richer cloth (*pévu mundu*), somewhat longer and broader, is worn over [464] the upper part of the body. As has already been said, Nayars [177] are to be found in all grades of public service, and these as well as others wear a kind of a neat loin cloth, with a shirt and coat together with a turban to cover the head, while others more fashionable appear in European costume with turbans instead of hats; others again wear hats as well, but their number is few. Among the poorer classes, the loin cloth is not larger than a yard-and-a-half or two by three-fourth of a yard.

302 The men shave their faces and bodies clean, leaving an oval patch of hair on the top of the head, while some grow it over a large surface of the head. In both cases, care is taken to keep the tufts sufficiently long, smooth and oily, and this [177] adds considerably to their neat and handsome appearance; but it is becoming the fashion to crop the hair and to dress it in the fashion of the Europeans.

291 The Nayar women wear an inner garment round the loins and this is covered by an outer garment which is usually two-and-a-half yards in length and one-and-a-half yards in breadth. Sometimes, instead of two cloths, one cloth sufficiently long for the purpose is worn. The dress is white, and sufficiently decent to cover the lower part of the body, and a small upper cloth serves as a covering above the waist. The Nayar women of the present day wear petticoats and cover the upper part of their body [369] with a piece of cloth. It is curious to notice that this form of [178] dress does not find favour (in the rural parts) with the Nambuthiris who are either their landlords or to whom they owe some kind of allegiance or subordination. The absence of any covering for the bosom in ordinary female dress has drawn much ridicule on the Nayars, and this custom has been much mis[548] understood by foreigners. So far from indicating immodesty, it is looked upon by the people themselves in exactly the opposite light, for among them prostitutes only cover the breasts. "A custom has in it nothing indecent when it is universal," as [171] one of the travellers philosophically remarks (Dall). It is, in [576] fact, a mark of disrespect to one's own elders and betters for either a male or female of the Nayar caste, and of all castes

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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Nayar

below it, to cover the upper part of the body, and traces of the same custom can still be found among other Dravidian tribes, some of them being people who are anything but uncivilized. The prohibition applies both to males and females. Men moreover cannot wear caps, turbans or shoes, and must divest themselves of these luxuries, when they meet their elders, even though the meeting takes place in the middle of the road. Until 1865, it was forbidden by law for women of the Chóvans and of those of the lower castes to wear any clothing above the loins. The present generation of Nayar women, except perhaps the servants and the poor, have taken to the use of an upper garment and petticoat, in the same way as the Nayar males now freely use a second cloth. Young girls wear a piece of cloth round the loins, while those of four and five years of age wear a small strip of cloth, or a piece of the bark of areca palm. Generally young children of both sexes go about naked.

The subject of hair-dressing and personal adornment is more psychological and ethnological than hygienic. The Nayar women take special care in the growth and preservation of their hair. They use a kind of medicinal oil to improve its growth, and to keep it smooth and shiny. Many a young woman's plait of hair reaches the knee or even lower, and this adds greatly to her beauty. The hair is parted in the middle and tied either tight to the ears or twisted up in front in a sort of cone or sometimes tied into a knot behind.

Jewellery.

The Nayar women are fond of jewellery. They are no doubt partial to gold, but unlike their Brahman sisters they wear very few ornaments for daily use. The oldest ornament of the Nayar lady is the *nágapatam* or serpent's hood, so called from the shape of the pendant. The ear-ornament is the *thóda*, which is a double convex disc, the front surface of which is either plain or set with rubies, for the wearing of which the ear-lobes are sufficiently dilated. This dilating process begins at a very early age, and the ear-lobes, in the case of a majority of the women, become so far distended as to make it possible to wear *thódas* of more than an inch in diameter. The tendency at present is to wear small ones which do not require much dilation. Then come the ornaments for the nose which are *múkkuthi* and *nathu*. These do not find favour with the young women of these days, and what is called the nose-screw set with a ruby has taken their place.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Kammalans

construction made of woven palm leaves and thatched, and we interviewed two men: Raman, aged fifty seven, and his eldest son, Kutikrishnan, who was thirty five. The name of the household and *tarawad* was Perinkulam.

Kutikrishnan told us that he had two fathers, Raman, who was with us that day, and Shangu, a younger one, aged fifty five, who was absent. All his fathers' sisters, and there had been three of them, had died in infancy. His mother was called Lakshmi and was fifty; I was unable to ascertain the name of the *tarawad* from which she came. Kutikrishnan's wife bore the same name as his mother and he had had three boys and a girl by her. Only the daughter was alive, as the sons had all died of what he described as "convulsions".

I asked why, if the fathers had been polyandrous, the second generation was not so too. Informant 1 attributed it to times having changed and "civilization spreading". By this he meant that people did not wear their hair tied in the typical Kerala top-knot on one side of the forehead any longer and had also taken to growing moustaches; he said, too, that it was the women now who objected to having more than one husband. In some marriage agreements, it was specified, he said, that the daughter of the house would only be given to one man. It was particularly in wealthy families that this was taking place, because they could afford it. Raman, informant 2, when consulted as to what he thought of these new ways, said that they were bad, but what could be done about them? In olden days, it was always said that polyandry was good because: "Where four breasts cannot agree, two heads can", meaning that the women cannot live in peace together while the men can. Nowadays, the young people did not seem to understand this, and the result was that property was split up between sons and life made harder for them.

When I came to make out the genealogy of the family, I found that in spite of all this talk about new-fangled ways, Amini, Kutikrishnan's sister was married polyandrously to three brothers of a *tarawad* called Warode. It was significant, however, that both informants disclaimed any knowledge of the names of the brothers of the elder husband, Narayan. Later, I heard that although Madhavan, a younger brother of informant 1, aged eighteeen, had not been publicly married to his sister-in-law, Lakshmi, he was known to share her with his brother in the old, traditional polyandrous way. The genealogy is given in Table 13.

The carpenter sub-caste of the Kammalans, Raman told us, have exogamous *tarawads* and *kiriyams*. They too, while observing the rule strictly for the *makkathayam tarawad*, are not so careful about it in the

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 201]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Kammalans

kiriyam; in that matrilineal descent group they limit themselves to not marrying those of their acquaintances whom they know belong to it. The sub-caste is also endogamous, carpenter only marrying "carpentress", and never a *Puri-asari*. Normally, boys alone can inherit the property, but if there are no male heirs, the girls, even if they are married, will inherit equal shares.

The members of the Perinkulam household were subtenants of a Nayar tenant called Mutad Achutah Nayar, himself the *verumpattamdar* of a Nayar *janmi* from Kavalappaia near Shoranur called Kavalappaia Mupil Nayar. As *kudiyiruppu* tenants of the site where the house was built, they paid a yearly rent of only one rupee.

On the 17th of November, 1949, I visited the house of a member of the fourth and last sub-caste of the Kammalans, the *Musari* (often pronounced *Mushari*), bell-metal (an alloy of lead and brass) smiths or braziers. It was near Lakkidi in the Walluvanad taluk, one furlong north of the main road, and to reach it, my interpreters and I followed a very attractive path, sunk deep between high banks of earth and overshadowed with coconut and arecanut palm trees.

We arrived at a miserable house, standing in a grove of palms and plantains, a red laterite courtyard in front, in which could be seen some stone moulds in grooves – no doubt the foundry. There was nobody about, but when we called out, a little girl (whom we later heard was called Menakhi) appeared and said that she would go and fetch her father. He arrived soon afterwards, a big, strong man, fifty years old, called Krishnan. He wore his hair over his forehead in the typical Malayalam top knot, and he had a very ugly face.

The name of the household, he told us, was Puawutterparamba and it belonged to the Chelamanaparamba *tarawad*. Our informant was the youngest brother of three, and there was a sister called Kali, aged forty nine, about whom, however, he could tell us nothing at all. The whole family used to live, it seemed, at a place called Nedungothani, near Palappuram. That was their village, he said. But then, the elder brother, Konnan, now sixty five years old, had got married some thirty years ago to a woman named Sita whom he had met while "roaming about". He had married late as a result of this proclivity for wandering away from home, and, with his bride, aged fifty today (Krishnan could not tell us the name of her *tarawad*), he had moved to Wallancheri, near Kutipuram, Pattambi, because he had found business bad in Nedungothani. He was still living in Wallancheri and had five children, of whom four were married, the two daughters away to men of other vil-

[i.e. in the carpenter Sub-caste of the Kammalans -- Analyst]

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
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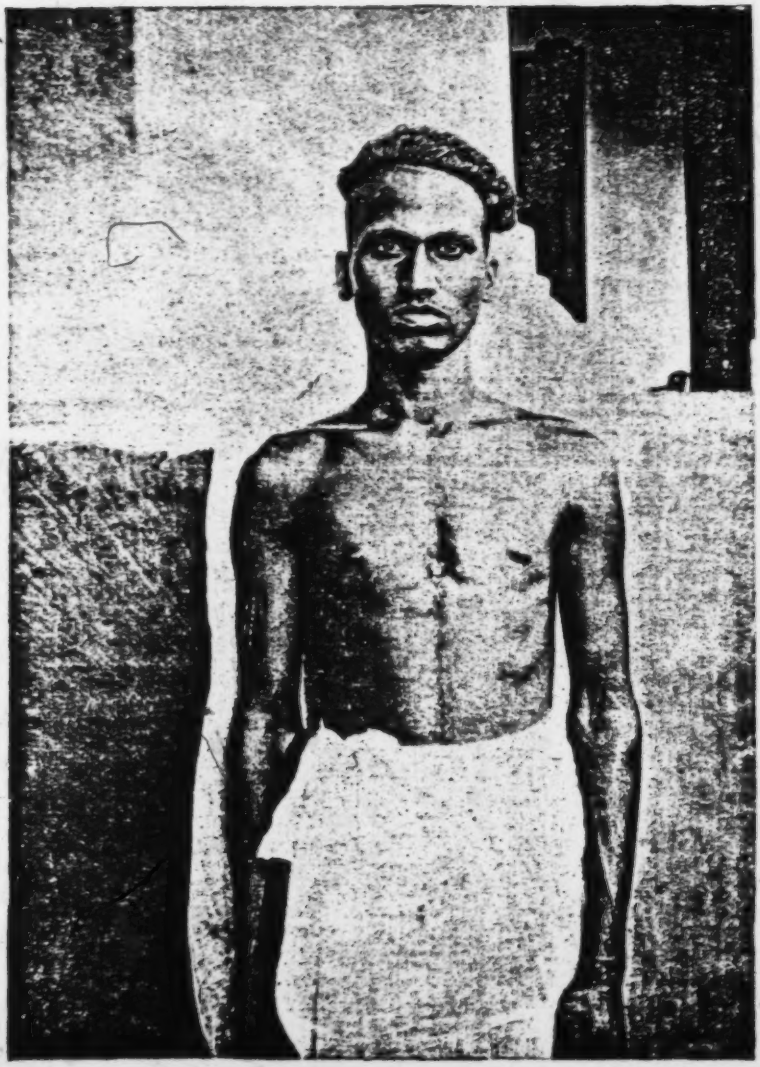

AKATTUCHARNA NĀYAR.

[Facing p. 305]

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
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NÂYAR FEMALES.

[facing P. 312]

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
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Nayar

no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. 764 613
This is called ashtagaya srādh. It puts an end to the [769]
need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the [775]
collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead [787]
gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important,
the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living
members of the taravād, cause miscarriage to the women,
possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on. On 764
the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory ceremony. 613
Until this has been done, any one touched by any 783
member of the taravād should bathe before he enters
his house, or partakes of any food. A man of the [564]
Athikurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil, in
which some gingelly seeds have been put, over the
persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling, and
the bath which follows it, remove the death pollution.
The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his offices [465]
on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the
taravād. In the case of death of a senior member of a 766
taravād, well-to-do and recognised as of some importance, 613
there is the feast called pinda atiyantaram on the 765
sixteenth day after death, given to the neighbours and 302
friends. With the observance of this feast of pindams
there is involved the dīksha, or leaving the entire body
unshaved for forty-one days, or for a year. There is no
variable limit between forty-one days or a year. The [184]
forty-one-day period is the rule in North Malabar. I
have seen many who were under the dīksha for a year.
He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew of
the deceased. One member only of the taravād bears 766
the mark of mourning by his growth of hair. He who 765
is under the dīksha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly 613
seeds to the spirits of the deceased every morning after [782]
his bath, and he is under restriction from women, from [784]
[834]

766 613 765 alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also from tobacco. When the dīksha is observed, the ashes of the [784] dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-[834] dried vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year after death. When it is carried on for a year, there is observed every month a ceremony called bali. It is noteworthy that, in this monthly ceremony and for the conclusion of the dīksha, it is not the thirtieth or three hundred and sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star which was presiding when the deceased met his death: the returning day on which the star presides.* For the [564] bali, a man of the Elayatu caste officiates. The Elayatus [793] are priests for the Nāyars. They wear the Brāhmin's thread, but they are not Brāhmins. They are not permitted to study the Vēdas, but to the Nāyars they [782] stand in the place of the ordinary purōhit. The officiating Elayatu prepares the rice for the bali, when to the deceased, represented by karuka grass, are offered boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds, and some other [465] things. The Elayatu should be paid a rupee for his services, which are considered necessary even when the man under dīksha is himself familiar with the [302] required ceremonial. The last day of the dīksha is one of festivity. After the bali, the man under dīksha is shaved. All this over, the only thing to be done for the deceased is the annual srādh or yearly funeral commemorative rite. [825] Rice-balls are made, and given to crows. Clapping of [775] hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and, should they not come at once and eat, it is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the taravād had better look out. The spirits of those who

[805] * All caste Hindus who perform the srādh ceremonies calculate the day of death, not by the day of the month, but by the thithis (day after full or new moon).

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

"if the Census Commissioner had enjoyed the privilege of living among the Nāyars, he would not have accused them of an 'excess of females.' The most beautiful women in India, if numerous, could never be excessive." Concerning Nāyar females, Pierre Loti writes* that "les femmes ont presque toutes les traits d'une finesse particulière. Elles se font des bandeaux a la Vierge, et, avec le reste de leurs cheveux, très noirs et très lisses, composent une espèce de galette ronde qui se porte au sommet de la tête, en avant et de côté, retombant un peu vers le front comme une petite toque cavalièrement posée, en contraste sur l'ensemble de leur personne qui demeure toujours grave et hiératique."] The Nāyars are particularly cleanly. Buchanan writes that "the higher ranks of the people of Malayala use very little clothing, but are remarkably clean in their persons. Cutaneous disorders are never observed except among slaves and the lowest orders, and the Nāyar women are remarkably careful, repeatedly washing with various saponaceous plants to keep their hair and skins from every impurity." The washerman is constantly in requisition. No dirty cloths are ever worn. When going for temple worship, the Nāyar women dress themselves in the tattu form by drawing the right corner of the hind fold of the cloth between the thighs, and fastening it at the back. The cloth is about ten cubits long and three broad, and worn in two folds. The oldest ornament of the Nāyar women is the necklace called nāgapatam, the pendants of which resemble a cobra's hood. The Nāyar women wear no ornament on the head, but decorate the hair with flowers. The nāgapatam, and several other forms of neck ornament, such as kazhultila, nalupanti, puttali,

* L'Inde (sans les Anglais).

796 themselves in the neatest and grandest possible attire. [302] They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a sticky preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or ghee, and sometimes with a superficial coating of [276] antimony powder. They also wear white, black, or red marks down the middle of their foreheads. They also chew betel, and thus redden their mouths and lips. [526] They then proceed to the enjoyment of another prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro on what is usually known as an uzhinjal, or swing made [262] of bamboo. On the festival day, after the morning bath is over, they take a light meal, and in the noon the family dinner is voraciously attacked, the essential and almost universal ingredients being ordinary ripe plantain fruits, and a delicious preparation of arrowroot powder purified and mixed with jaggery (crude sugar) or sugar, and also cocoanut. Then, till evening, dancing and [593] merry-making are ceaselessly indulged in. The husband population are inexcusably required to be present in the wives' houses before evening, as they are bound to do on [586] the Ōnam and Vishu occasions. Failure to do this is looked upon as a step, or rather the first step, on the part of the defaulting husband towards a final separa- [132] tion or divorce from the wife. Despite the rigour of the bleak December season during which the festival commonly falls, heightened inevitably by the constant blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure from their early baths, and their frolics in the water. The biting cold of the season, which makes their persons shiver and quiver, becomes to them in the midst of all their ecstatic frolics an additional source of pleasure. The two items described above, viz., the swinging and beating of the water, have each their own distinctive

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788 same day. Each Tiyan then marches thrice round the heap, and falls prostrate before the lingam; and a certain Nāyar sub-caste removes the husks preparatory to the [789] spilling of the milk. The festival finally closes with a mysterious ceremony, in which ghee and mantrams play a great part, performed for two days consecutively by the presiding Nambūdiri, and Kottiyūr is then deserted for another year."

"A shrine," Mr. Fawcett continues, "to which the Malayālis, Nāyars included, resort is that of Subramania at Palni in the north-west corner of the Madura district about a week's march from the confines of Malabar near [765] Palghat. Not only are vows paid to this shrine, but men, [302] letting their hair grow for a year after their father's [782] death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he 796 is carrying is called a kāvadi. There are two kinds of 788 kāvadi, a milk kāvadi containing milk, and a fish kāvadi 782 containing fish, in a pot. The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni, he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kāvadi, and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the rôle of a beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow, leaves his kāvadi and his hair, and a small sum of money. Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nāyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nāyar as expressed under certain circumstances, for between the Nāyars and these there